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FM AMEMBASSY HARARE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2034
INFO RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY
RUEHUJA/AMEMBASSY ABUJA 1733
RUEHAR/AMEMBASSY ACCRA 1608
RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA 1737
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 0374
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 1017
RUEHDK/AMEMBASSY DAKAR 1366
RUEHKM/AMEMBASSY KAMPALA 1794
RUEHNR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI 4223
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 0858
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC//DHO-7//
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC
RUCPDOG/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK//DOOC/ECMO/CC/DAO/DOB/DOI//
RUEPGBA/CDR USEUCOM INTEL VAIHINGEN GE//ECJ23-CH/ECJ5M//

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 000940

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NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR B. PITTMAN
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/17/2017

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ZI](#)

SUBJECT: POLICE BEAT PEACEFUL MARCHERS CALLING FOR NEW
CONSTITUTION

REF: A. HARARE 00671

[1](#)B. HARARE 00503

[1](#)C. HARARE 00870

Classified By: Poloff Scott Higgins, reason: 1.4 d

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (U) Riot police used baton sticks to disperse more than 50 NCA activists peacefully marching in Harare on October 16 for a new constitution. Several NCA activists were arrested and released without charge and more than 30 were injured. The assault comes on the heels of the arrest of 75 WOZA members in Harare on October 15 for marching to raise awareness about political violence against its members. Police did not use excessive force in these arrests, and all WOZA activists were released that same day without charge. As we have noted, there is a sharp contrast between the supposed progress being made in the SADC mediation talks to establish conditions for free and fair elections and the reality of the poisonous atmosphere of violence and fear the government continues to perpetuate. End Summary.

NCA Activists Get the Stick...

[1](#)2. (U) An unannounced National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) march of more than 50 members on October 16 was met by scores of riot police wielding batons in downtown Harare. The group was marching to Parliament to advocate for a new constitution. According to Embassy staff observing the event, police met the marchers along their route and ordered them to sit down. Soon after, a police superintendent arrived and informed the activists they were under arrest, at which point they scattered in all directions. Police began

beating those they could catch with baton sticks -- several pedestrians in the immediate area were also indiscriminately beaten.

13. (C) NCA Chairman Lovemore Madhuku confirmed to us that several activists were arrested and released without charge and more than 30 suffered injuries. Frances Lovemore, director of Counseling Services Unit (CSU), a local NGO that provides medical assistance to victims of state-violence, told us the NCA activists mostly suffered deep tissue bruising and lacerations.

14. (U) This marks the second time in three months NCA activists have elicited a violent response from security forces. In July, police arrested and tortured more than 240 NCA members after a similar demonstration in Harare (reftel A). In that event, police at Harare Central police station forced the NCA activists, who included elderly women and women with young children, to lie face down in rows as more than 100 police officers and suspected ZANU-PF youth militia took turns assaulting the group for five hours. All were released that evening without charge -- more than 170 required medical attention for severe injuries. One activist, a 64-year-old grandmother, received head injuries that CSU told us contributed to her death some five weeks later.

While WOZA Gets A Pass -- This Time

15. (U) The strong police reaction to the NCA demonstration comes on the heels of 75 WOZA members arrested in Harare on

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October 15 for marching to raise awareness about the group's recently released report on political violence against its members. The WOZA marchers made it to Parliament, where police arrested the group without incident. They were released later that same day without charges.

16. (U) WOZA members have not been so fortunate in other recent events. In June, for example, police in Bulawayo used batons to violently break up a crowd of 200 WOZA activists and arrested seven women, including WOZA leader Jenni Williams (reftel B). There have been recent reported threats against William,s life by several Bulawayo police officers.

17. (U) WOZA has good reason to draw attention to the political violence directed against its members. The preliminary report on political violence from WOZA offers statistics on violations reported by the group's members from 2000 to 2007 including: 51 abductions, 188 assaults, and 159 incidents of torture. The police were the most commonly identified perpetrators, with a small number of violations coming at the hands of the army. Since its founding in 2003, WOZA has conducted more than 100 protests for social justice and more than 3,000 members have spent time in police custody, many more than once.

Comment

18. (U) As we noted in September (reftel C), there is a sharp contrast between the supposed progress being made in the SADC mediation to establish conditions for free and fair elections and the reality of the poisonous atmosphere of violence and fear the government continues to perpetuate. Many in the opposition and civil society are outraged that talks continue while security forces forge ahead with their repressive activities. MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai has taken notice; earlier this week he is reported to have said he would pull his party out of the talks if something wasn't done about the violence. End Comment.

DHANANI